



Brazoria County Historical Museum

100 E. Cedar, Angleton TX 77515
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Railroads

Railway Lines and Plantations

1860-1907

In 1860, the Houston Tap and Brazoria Railway, with tracks from Fort Bend County to East Columbia, was the first railroad in Brazoria County. To build this railroad, forty-six major plantation owners received a loan of \$300,000 from the State Special School Fund as well as a \$100,000 bond issue from Brazoria County.



The railway, known as the Columbia Tap owned two 4x4x0 class locomotives, each of which had four small front wheels and four large drive wheels. Additionally, the locomotives pulled two passenger cars, seven box cars, and eighteen platform freight cars. Stations were in East Columbia, Hinds, Chenango, Bonney, and Sandy Point.





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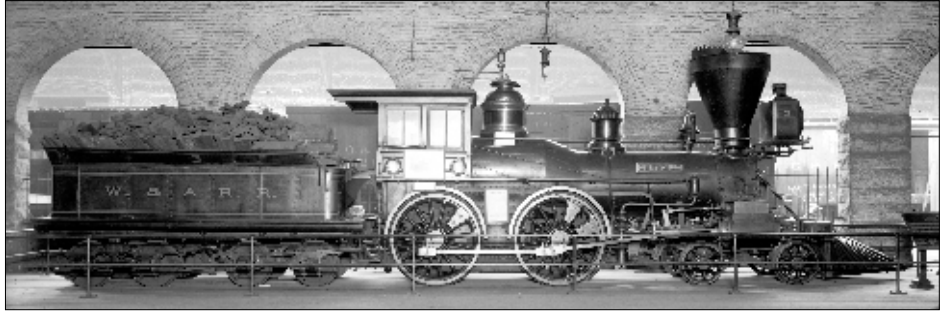
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Workers moved narrow-gauge tracks from field to field. Freshly cut sugar cane must be processed before the raw sugar drips out. Only then can the sugar be shipped to a refinery. Oyster Creek Station, north of present day-Angleton, operated until 1899 with three steam sugar mills, several cottons gins, a post office, and a general store.

A Second Railroad:

In 1878, the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway laid tracks across northern Brazoria County, via Manvel and Alvin. East Columbia trains bound for Houston now had the option of a shorter route to the ships in Galveston Harbor.



The Shift to Cotton:

The man on top of the bales looks for sparks that could cause a serious fire. Railroads helped create a worldwide



Daily View of Alvin Depot:

Brazoria County farmers flocked to Alvin to sell their produce to buyers waiting at the siding. Trains at the centrally-located crossroad could ferry the goods either to Fort Bend County, Houston, or Galveston.



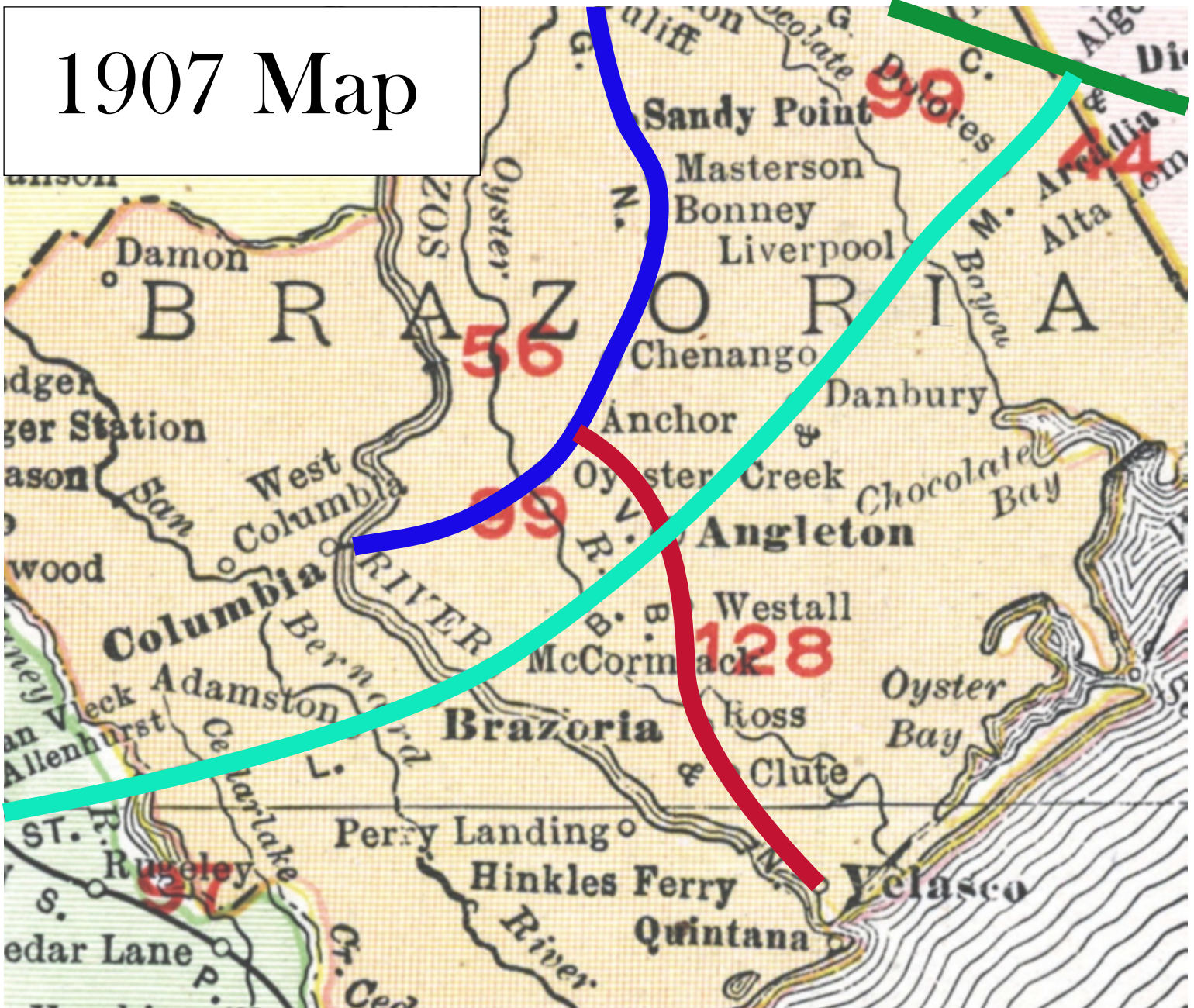


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Railroads

1907 Map



A 1907 map shows four railroad lines running through Brazoria County:

- International and Great Northern Railroad (I-GN) - East Columbia to Houston
- Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway (GC&SF) - Manvel to Alvin to Galveston Co.
- Velasco, Brazos and Northern Railway (VB&N) - Velasco to Angleton to Anchor
- St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway (STLB&M) - Brazoria to Galveston Co.



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Railway, Bridges and Industry- 1907-1960

The first half of the twentieth century was a period of great change for Brazoria County. In spite of hurricanes and floods, railroad expansion enhanced farming, mining, and chemical production activities.



Morning Arrivals:

These men are commuting by train to work for the Freeport Sulfur Company. As they line up to punch their time cards, they pass by a board that lists the names of the local men serving in the military. During the four-year period of World War II, industries in Brazoria County strongly supported war efforts.



Hastings Oil Field:

Originally active between Pearland and Alvin during the 1930s, the Field was serviced by the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway that ran across northern Brazoria County. The oil formation was deep, anywhere from 5,000 to 13,000 feet, and was an important military supply source during World War II.



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Brazoria:

The 1907 St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway bridge across the Brazos River embodies the County's railroad growth. The corresponding discovery of oil and sulfur led to full-scale railroad operations. In 1913, the Houston and Brazos Valley Railway built a second bridge across the river at Freeport to reach Bryan Mound.



Hoskins Mound:

The Freeport Sulfur Company leased the mound in 1922. The Houston and Brazos Valley Railway then laid 12.5 miles of track from Clute to Stratton Ridge, Demi John Island, and Hoskins Mound. One year later it began recovering huge amounts of sulfur that eventually amounted to twice as many tons as any other sulfur operation in Brazoria County. Cooled sulfur chunks traveled to customers by rail.





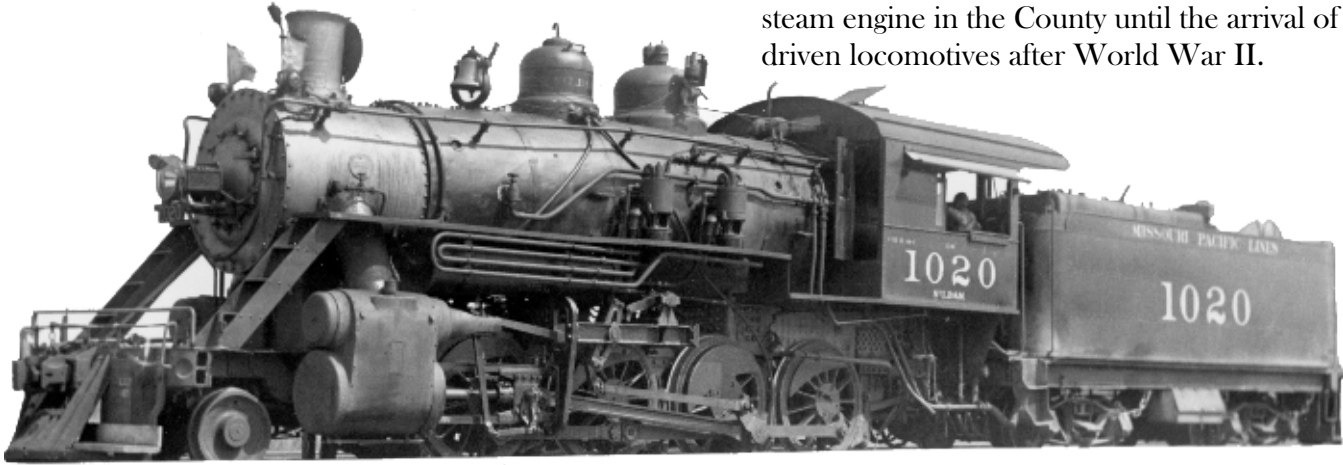
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Work Horses of Brazoria County:

This 2x8x0 class locomotive had two small front wheels and eight large driving wheels. It was a popular oil-burning, steam engine in the County until the arrival of diesel driven locomotives after World War II.



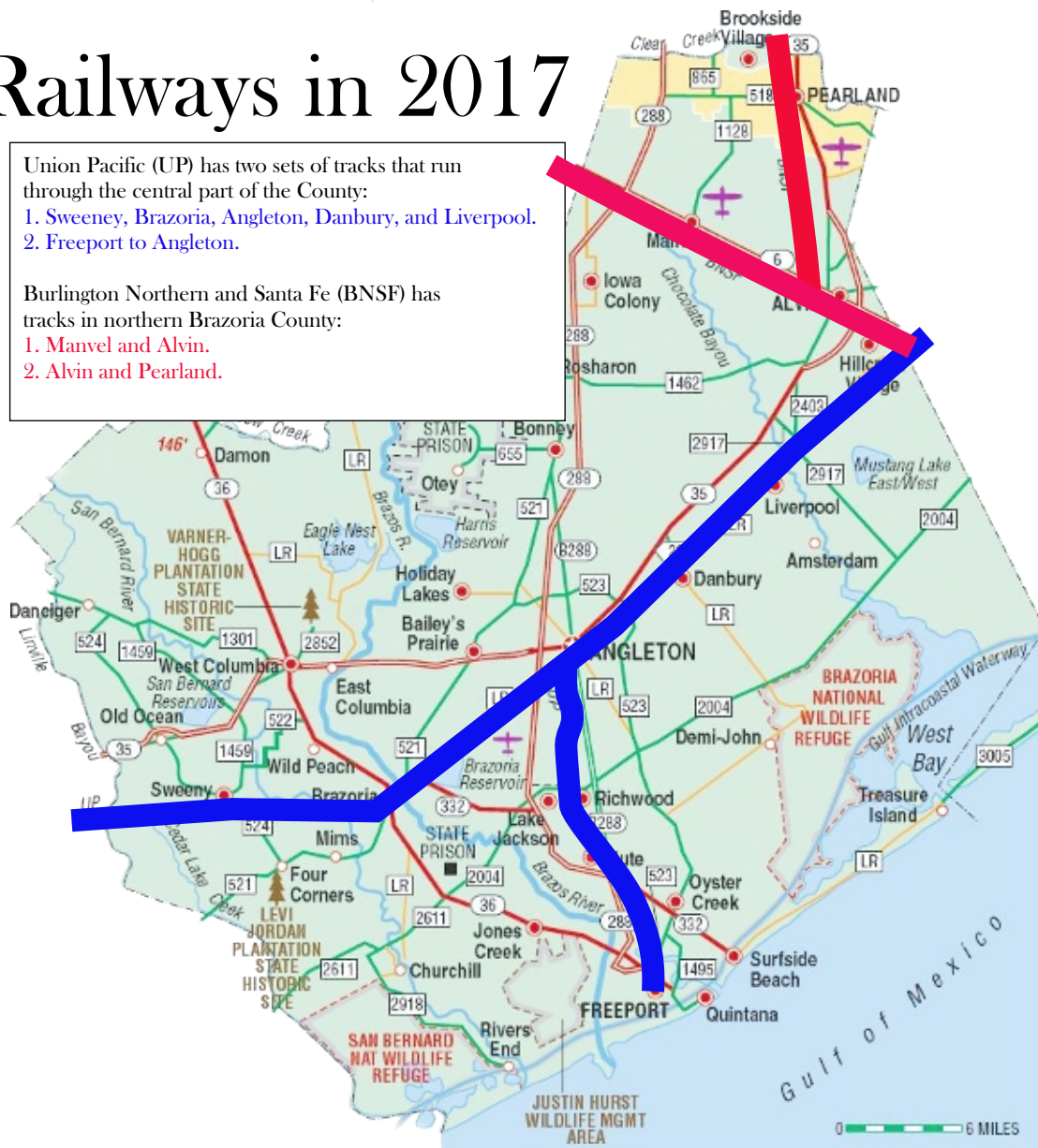
Railways in 2017

Union Pacific (UP) has two sets of tracks that run through the central part of the County:

1. Sweeney, Brazoria, Angleton, Danbury, and Liverpool.
2. Freeport to Angleton.

Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) has tracks in northern Brazoria County:

1. Manvel and Alvin.
2. Alvin and Pearland.





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From Passengers to Cargo- 1960-2018

Today's passenger trains are used mostly for commuting by Amtrak, which no longer has depots in the County. Railroads also are used to haul volumes of heavy freight. The large plants at Freeport and Chocolate Bayou as well as smaller local industries depend on trains to deliver raw material and to distribute their goods.



Union Pacific Road Engine:
Brazoria County railroad power rests on the reliability of its locomotives. This 4,400 HP, C-3 class diesel consists of a team of six drive wheels in front and six drive wheels in back. It is currently the most popular engine used in the county.

The Angleton Yard:
Railroad operations are an essential part of the livelihood of many men and women in Brazoria County. Many people work in the chemical plants, others labor in fields, and some work for the railways themselves attaching freight cars at various depots, maintain sidings and tracks, driving the trains and ensuring safety.



Dow Chemical Company:
Construction materials for the plant began arriving in Freeport by train in the 1940s, and soon operations to extract magnesium from the ocean began. By the 1960s, it was the largest chemical processing plant in the world. Since then the plant has expanded further to consist of four major complexes. Its products are transported by rail, trucks, and ships.



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Brazoria County Rice:

Local farmers are among the leading producers of rice in Texas, and trade with Riviana Foods in Freeport, which merged with American Rice in 2017. It is the largest rice processor in America and a significant railroad client for our local planters.



Rangen Inc. (Connatural Services Companies):

A railroad siding, or low speed track section, in Angleton enables this aquaculture feed plant to receive organic material that it then manufactures into various foods for commercial fish-farming industries. The company provides feed for crawfish, shrimp, trout, catfish, and a myriad of other local fish-pond operations.